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# DRAMA

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DARLINGTON ■ ANNUAL  
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# DRAMA

VOL. 8

JUNE MCMXXX

NUMBER 18

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

## SOME RECENT PLAYS

By Percy Allen

IT has been my good fortune, of late, to see some deeply interesting performances in London: first and foremost among them, Mr. Gielgud's Hamlet at the Vic.—an impersonation of the very highest merit. His Mark Antony in "Julius Cæsar," some months before, awakened close observers to the potentialities of this young actor. His Macbeth, eclipsing all others that I have yet seen, strengthened conviction; and the Hamlet following, though perhaps slightly less perfect than Macbeth, made it, in my judgment, a certain thing, that Mr. Gielgud will one day, be recognised as England's foremost Shakespearian actor. I have never before watched a Hamlet so well equipped at all points, technically, intellectually, emotionally, physically, for that noble part. His opposite, Miss Martita Hunt, is an actress who combines exceptionally acute intelligence with accomplished executive abilities.

After Shakespeare—setting aside the Greeks—I regard Ibsen as Europe's greatest dramatist. "A Doll's House," at the Criterion—of all theatres!—and "Ghosts," at the Everyman, were both well worth seeing; Miss Frangcon Davies, though weak on her curtains, and, occasionally, deficient in power, giving a very comprehending portrayal of Norah. The production, as a whole, however, had one obvious failing—the attempt to adapt a modern naturalistic acting-technique to a play written, and dressed, for an age already fifty years old. To work in the convention for which the author wrote, is surely the better way. When first I heard that Miss Thorndike was cast for Mrs. Alving in "Ghosts," I was dubious whether that fine actress's naturally broad and dynamic method

might not obscure the inward, temperamental intensity, so essential to a true Ibsen effect. I need not have doubted. Judiciously produced by Mr. Malcolm Morley, and working with a well balanced cast, we had, at the Everyman, the most satisfying production of "Ghosts" that I can remember; and, from Miss Thorndike, the most impressive among her recent performances. After the Ibsen plays, that once popular farce, "His Excellency the Governor," revived at the Kingsway, though entertaining enough, seemed singularly remote from life. Mr. John Brandane, the Scottish dramatist, is fast establishing a reputation south of the border. His unpretentious comedy, "The Glen is Mine," played, for the first time in London, by the Scottish National Players, under the auspices of the Everyman Theatre Guild, is a technically sound, and genuinely entertaining piece of work, in which by far the best part—that of a canny, pawky crofter, whom events, and the playwright, aid in escaping bankruptcy, and eviction from his holding—was played with truth, and a keen sense of native Highland humour, by Archibald Buchanan. It is pleasant, in these days, to sit and chuckle at clean, competent work.

"Down our Street," at the Vaudeville, is competent also, so far as atmosphere and creation of character are concerned; though these are drawn from no Highland glen, but from swarming East-end slums, wherein life, as here portrayed, is tragical comedy, sordid, materialistic and weak; its gloom irradiated by flashes of raciest vernacular that positively compel one's laughter. Miss Nancy Price and Mr. Maurice Harvey magnificent. Of "Debonair," contrived by Mr. Frank Vosper,

## SOME RECENT PLAYS

from a novel by G. B. Stern, what can I say, excepting that I was never able quite to fathom the mental operations that went to its making? The thing, for me, from first to last, was "in the

air," and only saved, if at all, by an already over-praised performance from Miss Celina Johnson, whose charm, and budding talent, may, one day, blossom and bear fruit.

## FESTIVAL REFLECTIONS

By Ivor Brown

THOSE who enter for the National Festival of Community Drama do so, as they say of other matters "in the spirit in which it is intended." They know that the judges' task is superhumanly difficult, for they must distinguish not between different achievement in like matters but between different performances in different modes. While I was privileged to sit with Miss Irene Vanbrugh in the judges' box at the New Theatre on April 28th, I suffered, as I know she suffered, the tremors of perplexity. And tremors is a mild word. How were we to compare the beautiful essay in recitative of the Falkirk High School with the prosaic country matters and robust comedy of the Dartmouth team as it plucked the perennial bloom in the garden of Eden Phillpotts? The Hampstead Play and Pageant Union rescued us as far as the Cup was concerned. Its team gave an almost flawless performance of a piece which demanded the widest range of stage-craft and of style.

But, while I sat and suffered, I never felt more strongly convinced that the Festival is worth while. It makes enormous demands on the time, patience and energy of the organisers, national and local, as well as of the many thousands who are concerned as performers and helpers. Its great function is to break down sectionalism. The amateur actor, instead of playing over and over again to the same group of local admirers (or detractors), plays to his friendly rivals, who have other ideas of theme and method. One great curse of theatrical opinion in this country is narrowness of loyalty. The theatre to me is a house of many mansions. But there are some who, caring for fantasy, can only jeer at fact; others, passionate for the actuality of tea-cups, will only shake regretful heads over the drama that aspires to heaven or sinks to hell. Those who are partisans of

Mr. Gordon Craig, will have nothing to do with realism and find it necessary to be ever jeering at Mr. Galsworthy. The Galsworthians dismiss Mr. Craig with a sigh. I cannot understand this intolerance. My ideal of "Theatre Street" would house every type of drama and its playgoers would be happy one night with Mr. Gordon Bottomley, whom I think Mr. James Agate defined as standing half-way between Hengist and Horatio, and on the next they would as happily attend the dramatist who stands half-way between Manchester and Wigan. The Festival is a great and salutary mixer. It is a model in miniature of Theatre Street.

We began the afternoon in the back-garden. The Blythswood Players of Glasgow gave us with vigour and veracity the local touch as well as stinging satire of those who remember themselves when they remembered the War. Mr. David Cleghorn Thomson's "War Memorial" is an efficient piece of its kind, but slightly lacks climax. The acting was good in parts, but the production was thought rather stiff and wanting in fluency. The group of people sitting in the garden had too much fixity. I often wish that all actors, amateur and professional, could see more of foreign models. When we have strangers in London, Russian theatres, Yiddish theatres, New York Theatre Guild and all the others, we have amazing revelations of what can be done in making dialogue and movement flow and bubble, eddy and turn calm again. All producers of domestic drama should carefully watch actual groups moving and talking and think how the flux of mood and movement can be reproduced to give atmosphere and animation to their stage-craft. No. 2 Theatre Street was the Scotland of Gruach, almost timeless, a misty home of poetry and passion. Declamatory acting, such as Mr. Bottomley's play demands, is

## FESTIVAL REFLECTIONS

in my opinion, tremendously difficult. It needs the highest accomplishment of motion and of diction if it is not to miss its effects. Any nervousness or self-consciousness (which may be unnoticed in a realistic play because it may be natural to the character) is fatal to the heroic manner. The player must have absolute conviction as well as absolute mastery of voice and limb. A clumsy or a faltering movement may ruin a finely spoken passage. The York Settlement Community Players attempted to scale the mountain-tops and slipped several times through insufficient command of the romantic technique. Compensation for gallantry was easily earned.

Next door was Devonshire. The young people's parts in "The Farmer's Wife" (Act III) were charmingly played and the comedy, which might have tumbled out of hand, was well controlled. The production at the end became rather muddled and some points, that might have been effective, were thrown away. It is easier, I know, to stage the local scene and speak the local tongue than to adventure among battles long ago. Dartmouth was playing, so to speak, on its home-ground, but playing keenly and, where the text allowed delicacy, with a delicate touch.

Back to Scotland. "The Singing Sands" is more of a chant than a play. The chorister Waves had been exquisitely trained. Their movements were simple but sufficient and the vocal effects were finely harmonised. Had the Festival been a tournament of diction only, Falkirk High School F. P. Dramatic Circle (B) must have stood first chance of victory. But "The Singing Sands" demands acting of only a statuesque kind. The call to the actors was for a vocal virtuosity, but hardly for vividness in characterisation, brightness in movement, and general sense of ensemble. Well-lit and well-spoken "The Singing Sands" merited high praise, but the elocutionary brilliance could not prevent us from reflecting that the players were attempting something which, difficult in itself, was considerably narrower and more specialised than the pieces chosen by others.

Number Five of Theatre Street was "The Gate of Heaven." Mr. Sladen-Smith's unworldly taste is here at its best; the play has tenderness but is not sentimental, and its humour never sinks to the facetious. It is an excellent piece for Festival purposes,

because it offers such a diverse parade of human and super-human, and even sub-human types. One part badly played would have torn a serious gap in the total effect, but Mr. Charles Thomas had his team sound fore and aft. Setting and costumes were delightful and the acting throughout had a confidence, a certainty, and a finish of which the best professional companies might have been proud. About plays of this kind there may hang a fatal air of affectation, a kind of "Aren't we being stylistic?" pose. "The Man Who Wouldn't go to Heaven" is not just an occasion for stained-glass attitudes and high-brow humours. It has real emotion and this was splendidly realised, particularly by Mr. Alfred Farmer. It is idle to talk about "the best performance of the day" because opportunities must vary widely in so comprehensive a tour of Theatre Street. But I can say that Mr. Farmer seemed to me magnificent in the flow of bitterness and generosity that his role contained.

As a spectator of all National Festivals so far I have no hesitation in saying that the work of this year's concluding matinee seemed to me wider in scope and finer in quality than on previous occasions. We have had in the past several brilliant productions, but never, I think, has one afternoon showed us so richly both the humble homes and the exotic pinnacles that make up the catholic facade of Theatre Street.

## \*AN ANALYSIS OF THE ENTRIES

1927-30

By JOHN HAMPDEN

Entries: 1927, 118; 1928, 179; 1929, 230; 1930, 397.  
Totals; Entries, 935. Plays, 539. Authors, 310.

*The most popular plays:* "The House with the Twisty Windows," 13 entries. "The Bishop's Candlesticks," "Campbell of Kilmohr," "The Price of Coal," 12. "Lonesome-like," 10. "Everybody's Husband," "The Old Lady shows her Medals," "The Twelve Pound Look," "Trifles," 9. "Thread o' Scarlet," "The Dear Departed," "The Master of the House," "Afternoon," "Crabbed Youth and Age," "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," "Riders to the Sea," "The War Memorial," 7.

*The most popular authors:* J. M. Barrie, 46 entries. H. Brighouse, 29. Philip Johnson, 20. Bernard Shaw, 18. Stanley Houghton, 16. J. J. Bell, 15. J. A. Ferguson, Susan Glaspell, A. A. Milne, Mary

\* See also Editorial note on page 147.

## ANALYSIS OF FESTIVAL ENTRIES

Pakington, 14. Joe Corrie, 13. Gilbert Cannan, Norman McKinnel, 12. Harold Chapin, Gertrude Jennings, L. du Garde Peach, D. Cleghorn Thomson, 11. Miles Malleon, Eugene O'Neill, Shakespeare, 10.

*Other interesting figures:* Yeats, 19. Housman, Syng e, Lennox, Robinson, 8. Drinkwater, Sierra, Sladen-Smith, Bottomley, 7. Lady Gregory, Masefield, 6. Galsworthy, Tchekov, 5. Brandane, Dunsany, 4. Goldsmith, 3. Sheridan, Cowley, Poe, 1.

As an indication of the tastes of the leading societies in Great Britain, the entries are of considerable interest and on the whole they speak highly of our amateur drama. Not only do the entries include every type of play, but the authors range from those of established reputation or popularity, or both, to those quite unknown to fame, who appear in considerable numbers, and despite a few lapses the level of the plays is high and the choice varied and often interesting.

The affirmation of Sir James Barrie's mastery of the one-act play was to be expected, but his majority is none the less remarkable. Hardly less striking is the emergence of Mr. Philip Johnson, the young Macclesfield dramatist who was unknown until "Legend" was adjudged the best new play entered in 1928. These National Festivals have given him a valuable opportunity. Local loyalties explain to some extent the welcome appearance of Mr. Corrie and Mr. Cleghorn Thomson, and (to a much lesser extent) Mr. Ferguson, Dr. Peach and Mr. J. J. Bell.

The Scottish Area, in which entries have increased so notably, has a healthy preference for Scots plays, while English dialect drama also seems to be becoming more fitting from the stimulus which the Festivals supply.

Mr. Laurence Housman's low score (8) is surprising in view of the wide-spread popularity of his one-act plays; Mr. Gordon Bottomley's (7) makes all the more welcome the appearance of two of his poetic dramas in this year's London final. The only surprise includes the Trial Scene from "The Merchant of Venice"! Next year there may be more adventurous entries. Certainly there are several living English dramatists whose omission may be deplored, but it would be a mistake to bewail the case of Shakespeare, Sheridan and Goldsmith, for none of them foresaw the modern demand for one-act plays, and most entrants are shy of submitting detached scenes. More poetic drama would certainly be welcome, and perhaps more foreign drama. About fifteen American playwrights are represented, with O'Neill and Susan Glaspell outstanding. (The four entries of "The Patchwork Quilt," by R. L. Field, are only one indication of the authologists' influence.) Other foreign authors number sixteen—excluding Euripides. He is the only classical dramatist, and no doubt his appearance is a tribute to Professor Gilbert Murray as much as to Euripides himself—a tribute worth having, whatever the purists may say.

## OBERAMMERGAU

By W. A. Darlington

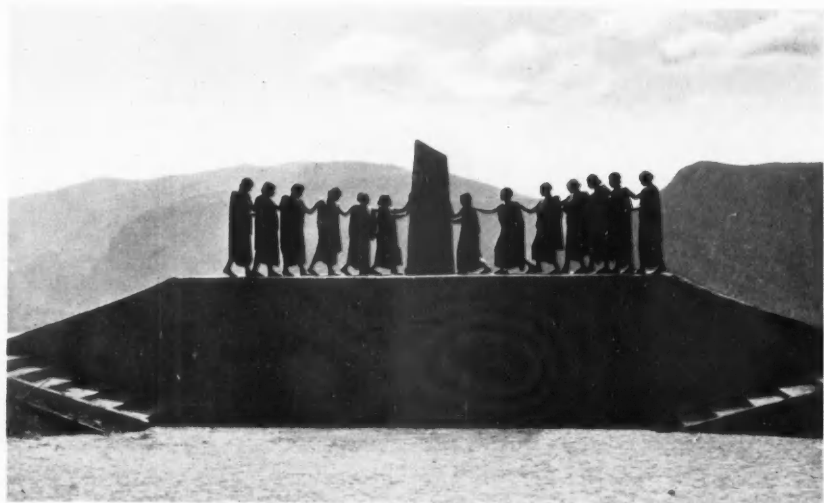
SO far as I know, I was the only one of the English journalists who went to Oberammergau for the first performance of this year's "Passion Play" who had also seen the play when it was last produced, in 1922; and it is therefore to be expected that much of what I have to say about it will take the form of a comparison between the two.

The play is so hedged about with tradition and convention that there is and can be little difference between any one performance and any other in their main features. I am sure that no producer will ever be allowed to tamper with the text or to rearrange the music. It is a safe conjecture that as long as the "Passion Play" continues, the Chorus will still execute its solemn marching and counter-marching at the beginning of each act, facing in eighteen times in single file and then, after singing its endlessly repetitive songs, facing out again in double file.

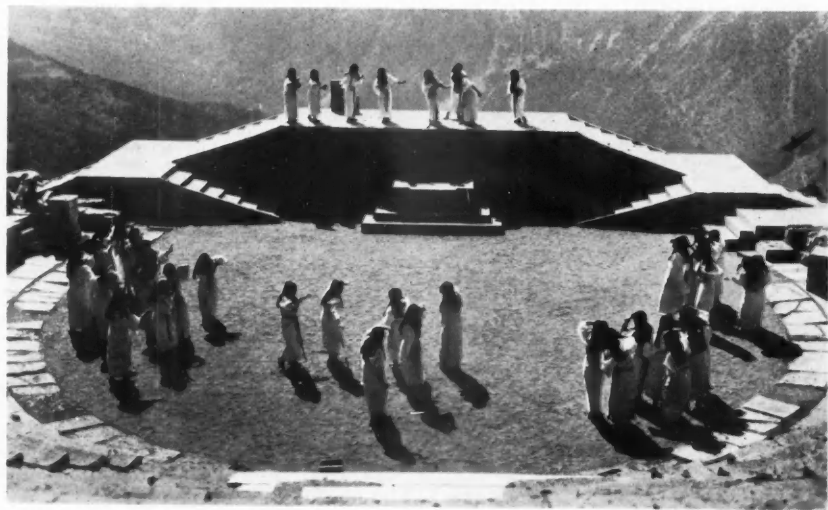
There remain only two points in which one production may differ from another—the

settings and the individual acting. In respect of its appeal to the eye, this year's play is immensely superior to that of eight years back. In 1922, the settings were crude and garish, and the whole production seemed to have been conceived in accordance with the ideas of a bygone (and to us) heavily inartistic generation. Now all that is changed. New scenery has been designed, and the costumes, though not different from the old ones in form, have a richness and subtlety of colour that is quite new. As a result, the big crowd scenes, and the tableaux from the Old Testament which are used to symbolise and interpret the action of the play, have now a pictorial value which was entirely absent from them in 1922.

As to the acting, I find that the work of the individual player—except for moments in the two big parts—counts for surprisingly little. "Surprisingly" is not really the word here, but I use it because the general impression among people who have never seen the "Passion Play" seems to be that the

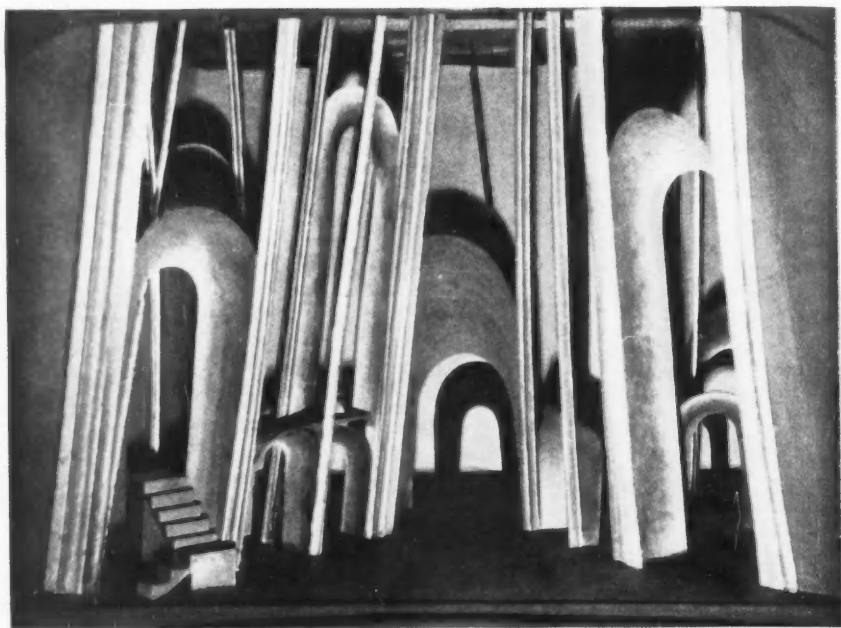


CHORUS OF OCEANIDES. FROM  
"PROMETHEUS" BY AESCHYLUS.



CHORUS OF THE "SUPPLIANTS" OF  
AESCHYLUS.

DELPHI 1930.



CONSTRUCTIVIST SETTING FOR  
 "CARMEN." BY A. RABINOVITCH.  
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## OBERAMMERGAU

Oberammergau players are actors of tremendous attainments. They are not; and what is more, the "Passion Play" gives them no opportunity to become so.

Acting before the vast auditorium and on the vast stage of the Passions Theatre does not admit of much subtlety, and only one of the company of 500 people (Guido Mayr, who plays Judas) has enough technical ability to attempt it successfully. He is an actor of fine natural talent, whose performance both in 1922 and this year has been an outstanding individual achievement.

In 1922, Herr Mayr divided the honours with another admirable actor, Auton Lang, whose increasing years have now compelled him to relinquish the part of Christ for the less exacting, though important, one of Prologue and Chorus. This year's Christ, Alois Lang, has not his kinsman's power of conveying strong feeling. He impresses you not by acting ability, of which I should say he has no very great share, but by the power and music of his voice, the simple dignity of his presence, and the extraordinary virility of his personality. Your verdict on him as actor may be what it will; but you cannot help admiring him as man.

With the acting of the smaller parts I have no space to deal here; and it is exactly my point that, except in a very full and detailed appreciation of the production, criticism of the individuals should have little place. It is in its massed effects that the "Passion Play" becomes an experience which no serious lover of the drama should willingly miss. You will often see better actors than these; but nowhere else can you find stage crowds impelled, as these are, by one common impulse to one common end.

It has been insinuated in some quarters that the play, the village and the people have all become commercialised. I do not believe there is a word of truth in this. It is true that the place (which is, after all, no peasant village but the headquarters of a highly skilled community of artists) has kept pace with modern developments. But is not that a more sincere and disinterested course of conduct than its alternative—to maintain an artificially primitive appearance for the benefit of tourists? And one thing is quite certain, that if no tourists come near the place, the Play would still continue as a religious act, maintained, as of old, at the villagers' expense.

## AN ENGLISH PASSION PLAY

By Seaward Beddow

OLD fashioned prejudices are dying, and churches are more and more making use of religious plays. It has been re-discovered that the great themes of religion can be given a singularly rich expression by means of the drama, for it is an art that can call in the aid of poetry, music, form, colour, and movement. Thus, what is said, is made living and manifold to spectators and players alike.

Because religious plays depend so much on atmosphere it is found valuable if the performance can be in a church. It seems amazing that the point could ever have been in dispute. A religious play in a theatre, or in a hall, has to struggle to win the right atmosphere; but in a church everything may be designed to help the one great end of religious impression. The play may be itself set in the midst of a service of hymn, prayer, and lesson, and it is best so done.

People will not ask for a brilliant "show," as if they had come to a theatre. But this does not permit any carelessness in the production. To have taken much pains is to have shown the sincerity and earnestness which the occasion properly demands and, without which, there can be no real success. Hence the importance of care for detail. I recall a performance of the "Little Plays" of St. Francis where the effect was spoiled because a strong electric lamp shone straight in our eyes through an unnecessary gap in the curtaining!

A further point, and one not always considered. It concerns the taking of money at the play. I again recall an experience. We sat waiting for the performance to begin. An offensively forceful person suddenly appeared between the curtains and lectured us all on the appalling meanness of the audience of the night before. It did not help the play! There is no reason why money should not be taken, but just *how* it is taken may make a vast difference.

The editor has kindly invited me to refer to a religious play recently performed at Wycliffe Congregational Church, Leicester,

## AN ENGLISH PASSION PLAY

where I am minister. It was called "At the City Gate" and was written by W. S. Lacey, one of our members. Its subject suited the approach of Easter for the scene was a gateway in the wall of Jerusalem on the evening of the day of the Crucifixion. The central theme of the story was the effect upon a young Roman soldier of having taken part in the execution of Jesus. Through the strong reactions of this young man's mind the writer sought to show the power over the human heart of the forgiving love of the Crucified Christ. In the treatment of the story there was a mystic element which was reflected in the manner of the staging and lighting. The play began impressively with a darkened stage and an unseen singer. It ended with a darkness that gradually passed into a bright vision of the Cross.

I may explain that it is our custom to do a religious play each year as part of our regular church work. The first was 15 years ago. On the principle that religious drama is best in a religious setting, the performances are in the church, and its grave, monastic severity of architecture is very helpful. There are always nine performances, three on Sunday nights. Great care is taken with the setting and lighting. As far as possible everything connected with the production is the work of the Wycliffe Players themselves, and the cast is drawn entirely from the members; we call in no "stars," and the names of the performers are not published. We look upon the performance as being a corporate religious act, and the play is always included in a service, the first part of which is conducted from the stage by the minister.

The more I see of the results the more am I convinced of the religious power of the religious play. If done with sincerity, simplicity, and beauty, it can move the mind very deeply indeed. Each year we hear of such results. I think that one of the principal reasons for this moving power is that both spectators and players are made to feel that religion is a living thing: ideas are seen in movement; feelings are embodied.

The drama has also the advantage of attractiveness. Announce a sermon, and few will come near—sometimes, it must be confessed, this is a sign of wisdom! Announce a play, and you will get the people. All sorts—young and old, religious and irreligious, educated and uneducated, happy

and miserable—will come expectantly. Religious drama is the Church's new opportunity to find common ground with the people.

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### Letter to The Editor

Dear Sir,

The B. Divisional Committee of the National Festival of Community Drama is asking societies in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex to submit to it the names of persons in their respective counties whom it might profitably co-opt. This year Essex made an appearance in the Festival, and did well, but it is not at present represented on the Committee, as it certainly should be. Norfolk and Suffolk (in spite of the dramatic fame of Norwich!) were alike absent from the competition, and we feel more, local centres in these famous shires. May I therefore use your columns to ask members of the League in the three counties to stir up an active East Anglian interest in the Festival, and communicate with me, or with the Hon. Secretary of our Division (Miss Florence Smith, 37 Devonshire Road, Cambridge) as to any way in which they think the cause may be helped?

Very faithfully yours,

CHARLES J. B. GASKOIN.  
Chairman, B. Divisional Committee, Eastern Area.

Fitzwilliam House,  
Cambridge,  
May 12th 1930.

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### THE THEATRE-TICKET AGENT

This agent's a meddlesome man who competes  
With the play-going public in purchasing seats;  
Having bought what we want he explains the position  
By proceeding to charge us a heavy commission.

For a musical play, or a silly revue,  
Or anything else that is spicy and new,  
Although the box-office betimes you explore, you  
Will find that the agent has been there before you.

But if you want seats for a classical play,  
You'll find him less likely to stand in your way:  
There is very small reason to fear that the fellow  
Will book many seats in advance for Othello.

Can it be that he feels in the depths of his heart  
A genuine zeal for the welfare of art,  
And thinks it a philistine action to plunder  
The patrons of classical drama? I wonder.

GUY BOAS.

# THE DELPHIC FESTIVAL

By Irene Mawer

IF drama be a manifestation of elemental truths, then Delphi is the ideal place for its renaissance, for there the theatre is part of the rhythm of the mountains themselves, and the very words of the actors re-echo from the stony heights of the rock.

Everything combines to unite audience and players alike with the forces of nature where they show supreme and untouched. The vast poetic dramas of Aeschylus, with their supernatural proportions, satisfy completely, we do not ask for incident and event while the sonorous poetry of Prometheus, smitten of Zeus, rolls from the broken but unconquerable heart of the divine sufferer, for whose sorrows the very daughters of the ocean lament.

The task of portraying such drama in such a setting might well have daunted a less courageous producer than Mme. Eva Sikelianou, wife of the poet Angelos Sikelianos, and, with him, joint organiser of the revival of the Delphic Festival. But one has only to meet Eva Sikelianou to know her to be dauntless. She has made a most magnificent attempt at what is perhaps the impossible.

We sat in the circular theatre carved in the hillside with the great Rock that towers over the Castalian spring reared above our heads, while higher yet swung pairs of eagles in the limitless blue. Beyond the simply constructed *skene* the mountainside fell into a deep ravine. Beyond that, forming the background to the stage, rose the mountains across the valley, catching the evening light with ever-changing soft, deep, mellow tones. The audience was of every tongue. The Greek ladies representing the various provinces in their national costumes made oddly fascinating pictures, and the uniforms of the soldiers, with their wide white skirts and rosetted shoes.

We waited, half afraid it must be confessed, for something that should justify itself in such a setting. And it came. The first moments of the Prometheus will surely remain for ever with those who saw it. The shaft of sunlight which broke across the face of the chained and suffering Prometheus. The sound of wind re-echoing from the mountain. The magnificent, sonorous quality of the first tortured words he uttered. Here were

things dreamed of as the true heart of drama, but never yet attained by those whose vision must be bounded by artificiality, whose sunlight must be a lime, and mountains but a painted cloth.

But even in these first moments rifts showed in the fine construction of the production, and threatened to shatter the whole. Following the ancient tradition of the Greek drama an attempt was made to employ masks and cothurni for some of the principal actors. We felt immediately the necessity for superhuman figures that should be proportionate upon the raised stage to the background of mountains. But unfortunately only the extremities of the figures had been enlarged. The effect of the masks and cothurni was to give an almost ludicrous meagreness to the bodies of the actors, as the mountain wind whipped their draperies about their strangely scanty forms. Had padding, and the weighty garments of the traditional figures been used a most majestic effect might have resulted. The players of Might and Force were further handicapped by the fact that there was no means of entering the stage save by coming into the orchestra by the *parados* and then mounting two flights of steps in sight of the audience. These figures upon cothurni should have stepped out from the *proscenion* upon the stage level. But the scenic designer had, wisely from his point of view, omitted a *proscenion* altogether, and Might and Force made a somewhat insecure passage perilous both up and down the long sloping flights of steps, which at once robbed them of the essence of their characters. Hephaestus, masked but without cothurni, fared better.

Prometheus was unmasked and needed no cothurni to increase his intensely impressive stature. But the mixing of masked and unmasked characters weakened the impression.

Of the performance of the anonymous Prometheus it is difficult to speak highly enough. To many of the audience it touched the supreme heights of artistry. As a feat of physical endurance alone it must rank as a masterly achievement. To stand for two hours immovable, yet passionately expressive, requires an almost incredible force of mind and body; while, when his magnificent

## THE DELPHIC FESTIVAL

voice continued to fill the theatre, to rise to heaven and, literally, to re-echo from the mountain until the end of the drama, we felt we were indeed in the presence of a power beyond the human.

This play ended with an elemental splendour in a roll of thunder from the mountain behind the theatre, which turned every head in the audience towards the Rock. When we looked back Prometheus had disappeared, and with him the rock to which he had been chained. This was a moment when nature and modern stage-craft were most magnificently united.

The chorus in both plays showed a patience of training and a wealth of archæological study, but they failed in both cases to achieve that sweep of poetic and dramatic imagery which we feel must have animated the classic chorus. The movements lacked virility and the young ladies seemed not far enough from the drawing-rooms of Athens to convince us of their parentage by Oceanus or Danaus.

But Mme. Sikelianou has here achieved a work of intense interest in her reconstruction of both positions and music, and the beautiful quality of the draperies of the Oceanides. The Egyptian costumes of the Suppliants were less successful in impression, and the passionless and endless Egyptian designs of their movements wearied the spectator of a drama which depends for its significance solely upon the force of suffering, hope and final despair of the fifty daughters of Danaus. The chorus leader in this play, however, proved herself artist enough to carry out the intricate movements as designed by the producer, and at the same time to instil into them a passionate and truly dramatic significance, which, had it been magnified by fifty equally finished performers, would have been intensely impressive.

It is easier to criticise technical achievement than to record the rare exhilaration to the student of drama which lay in these performances. We can but thank Eva Sikelianou for the power of her vision, which made it possible for us to know "Drama" as the voice of

"Divine ether, and swift-winged winds"

Here is surely a secure rock for the building of a world movement in art and the ideal social life which is the confessed aim of the Delphic revival.

## "THE RUSSIAN THEATRE"

UNDER the above title Messrs. George Harrap have recently issued (at the price of five guineas) an English version, magnificently illustrated, of the volume by René Fülöp-Miller and Joseph Gregor, the last-named being the Keeper of the theatrical collection in the National Library in Vienna. Many people are often at a loss to account for the bizarre and apparently meaningless Russian stage designs which are reproduced from time to time in theatrical magazines and elsewhere. The special interest of this book is that not only does it explain the aesthetic *raison d'être* of even the most outrageous example of communist art, but that it places them in their proper relation to the whole history of Russian stage development. It is really illuminating, for instance, to be told how closely such a design as that reproduced at page 137 of this issue of "Drama" derives from the architectural stage constructions of Renaissance designers, with their many-arched perspectives. The attempt of the Bolsheviks to enforce new standards of artistic appreciation is also shown to result from the very same impulse which drove eighteenth century Tzardom to impose alien and European forms of art upon a more or less unwilling populace.

While paying every tribute to the value of classical convention, the writers of this book regard the revolutionary practice of Diaghilev in Ballet and of Stanislawsky in drama as providing the two outstanding accomplishments of the pre-revolutionary Russian stage. Especially is this the case as regards the Ballet, and Dr. Gregor takes the view that without the inspiration of Diaghilev the Imperial Ballet, though having attained undoubtedly a marvellous technical standard, would have become as sterile and uneventful as the Schools of France and Italy.

The historical section of the book will be to many people the most interesting. But the whole work contains an amount of authoritative guidance which cannot be obtained elsewhere, and which we can only recommend most cordially to every student of the theatre.

GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

## BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF

### THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE.

President:

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN.

Chairman of the Council:

H. GRANVILLE-BARKER.

Secretary: GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

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*MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All Enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, at the Offices of the League, 8 Adelphi Terrace London, W.C.2.*

Telephone: TEMPLE BAR 8507-8.

*Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.*

THE publication of the Report of the National Theatre Drafting Committee a few days ago coincided very closely with the publication of Mr. Granville-Barker's volume "A National Theatre" which is now obtainable at all booksellers price 5s. net or post free from the Drama League Bookshop for 5s. 4d. We shall deal fully with the Report and with the book in the July number of "Drama." In the meantime we would advise all our members to study both carefully. Mr. Granville-Barker has provided the best possible ammunition for those who are fighting in the cause of a National Theatre. The book deals less with general theories than with practical working details. It is a positive contribution to the problems of management and finance, and that after all is worth pages of argument. The Report itself does not differ from the book too widely in its suggestions for it to be legitimately regarded as in general harmony therewith. Such unanimity is impressive and hopeful.

Attention is drawn to the notice of the Annual General meeting of the League which members will receive together with this number of "Drama." The meeting will be held on Friday afternoon, June 27th, at 2.30 p.m., at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C., and besides the usual business, the names of the provincial representatives of the Council will be announced. Twenty-nine nominations from the ten areas involved in this election have been received, and it is hoped that all members outside London will exercise their powers of voting.

In presenting the Howard de Walden Cup to the winning company in the National Festival of Community Drama at the Queen's Theatre on April 28th, Sir Charles Trevelyan described the Festival as an enterprise of national importance. Mr. John Hampden's interesting analysis of the Festival entries for the past four years supports this view. We regret that for reasons of space we cannot print this list in full. We shall, however, be pleased to send a copy of it to any applicant who encloses stamps to the value of 6d.

A few vacancies remain in the party to be conducted to Oberammergau by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth in August next. Leaving London on August 20th, the party will spend two nights in Munich and will reach Oberammergau on Saturday, the 23rd, in time for the performance of the Passion Play on Sunday. Home on Monday, the 25th, via Cologne and Belgium, or by a special extension via Stuttgart and Berlin. Full particulars from the British Drama League, or direct from Sir Henry Lunn, Limited, 5 Endsleigh Gardens, W.C.1.

On another page in this issue will be found an announcement of the two Drama League Summer Schools for amateur producers at Norwich and St. Andrews respectively. The Easter School proved a great success and students for July or August are advised to send in their applications as early as possible. These two forthcoming Schools will be residential in character and from the social point of view alone will be very attractive.

# RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by Norman Marshall

- "Hammersmith Hoy." By Nigel Playfair. Faber. 21s.  
 "Acting, its Theory and Practice." By Lane Crauford. Constable. 10s. 6d.  
 "Lysistrata." By Maurice Donnay. Translated by William A. Drake. Knopf. 7s. 6d.  
 "Agis King of Sparta." By Una Broadbent. Allen and Unwin. 5s.  
 "The Worker's Theatre." By Ness Edwards. Cymric Press. 1s. 6d.  
 "Modern Short Plays." Edited by H. A. Treble. London University Press. 2s.  
 "The House of the Heart and other Plays for Children." By Constance D'Arcy Mackay. Holt. 25s.

SIR Nigel Playfair's book has already been so widely reviewed that it would be superfluous to do more than remind those who have not yet read it that here is an exceptionally readable theatrical autobiography which also provides an extremely good argument for a National Theatre scheme. The book is finely illustrated with scenes from Hammersmith productions, and is mercifully unlike nearly all other theatrical autobiographies in that there is no chapter entitled "Early Struggles."

Books on the theory and practice of acting usually make tedious reading. The fact of the matter is that there is not enough to be said about the subject to make a book. Acting is an art with comparatively few rules and principles, and those not very complicated. This does not mean that acting is easy to learn, but all that can be taught to the beginner are a few rules and a set of exercises to develop the voice and limbs as flexible instruments of expression. The rest can be learned only from experience. The fault of most books on acting is that they set out to show how various emotions can be expressed by adopting certain tones, gestures, attitudes, expressions, leading the actor to believe that by learning a series of tricks and poses he is relieved of the necessity to think and feel for himself, overlooking the fact that every emotion has countless gradations, and that no two people naturally express the same emotion in the same way. Mr. Lane Crauford's book is entirely free from this fault. His method is simply to state the few sound rules of acting and illustrate them by instances from the work of past and present actors. It is these "illustrations" which make the book something far more important and interesting than a mere handbook of acting. Everybody interested in the theatre, even if they have never stepped upon a stage and never have any intention of doing so, will enjoy this book for its extraordinarily varied collection of criticisms, stories and sayings of actors of all periods, ranging from Garrick to Miss Adele Astaire, which the author uses to illustrate his points. Besides being an unusual and very fascinating book, it is also an uncommonly practical and sensible one.

Maurice Donnay's adaptation of *Lysistrata* is the third volume in the "Theatre of To-day" series edited by Mr. Nathan, who explains that he has included this play "not because of its importance in the modern catalogue of dramatic art, but, very simply, because it seems to me, first, to be an immensely amusing one; secondly, because it is the best modernized adaptation of one of the classics that I know of; thirdly, because it represents to me the

spirit of present-day French theatrical humour better than anything else I am acquainted with; and fourthly, because it is perhaps the oddest contribution to dramatic letters made in recent times by a member of the French Academy." I need only add that the play completely justifies all these reasons. It is easily the most entertaining play I have read for a very long time. Although practically unknown in this country it has been frequently produced on the continent, and a week or two ago was given a remarkable production in America by Norman Bel Geddes.

A play of a very different type, but also with a classical setting, is Miss Broadbent's workmanlike study of young King Agis of Sparta and his attempt to rouse his country from its decadence and return to the old regime in all its austerity. As the author points out, there is a curious air of modernity about his programme and the events to which it led. One of the attractions of the play is the contrast between "this strangely modern tragedy" and the background of barbaric superstition against which it is played out. Written partly in prose and partly in verse, it would probably be a better play if it had been written entirely in prose, as the author is apt to use verse as a means of saying in three lines what in prose would have been said in one. Apart from a tendency to wordiness the story is handled with a capital sense of the theatre, especially in the vigorously written crowd scenes. It should prove a useful play to school and university dramatic societies as there is only one woman's part, and that a small one.

"The Workers' Theatre" is an ingenious and at times ingenuous argument on the theme that the tests of healthy drama are: "How far does it assist society to overcome the obstacles of social life; how far does it place the problems of society upon the stage; and how far does it assist in solving these problems. When the drama fails to pass these tests it's decadence is an assured fact." In support of this theory the author expends a considerable amount of ingenuity in arguing that good drama has always been "class art and class propaganda." Shakespeare, "the greatest snob of modern times," is especially singled out as a class propagandist, particularly in "Macbeth," "Hamlet," "The Merchant of Venice," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream." On the whole it is a woolly piece of writing.

Of the seven plays in "Modern Short Plays" at least five will be new to most readers, but unfortunately the novelty of the selection is counterbalanced by a weakness on the part of the editor to select plays for their literary rather than dramatic qualities. As for Miss Mackay's plays for children, they are thoroughly efficient, but of a sort which I personally dislike—pretty-pretty plays suitable "ethically, dramatically and educationally" for school performances. People who write plays for children to act are usually, quite unconsciously, rather selfish about it. They write the sort of plays they and their friends like to see children perform, which are usually quite different from the sort of plays the children themselves like performing. However, I recommend this book to those who like the sort of children's play which makes the audience rapturously exclaim, "Aren't they perfectly sweet, the little darlings!"

# NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

B.A.D.F. DRAMA WEEK,  
March 31st to April 5th.

For staunch adherence to the ideals of the community theatre, none of our affiliated societies rank above the Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation. To its numerous branches it offers neither money prize nor challenge cup; nothing but the privilege, accorded to the best productions of the winter season, adult and juvenile, of a place on the programme of the annual drama week.

In making their selections, the Committee regard acting and team-work as all important. For that reason, the Northfield Community Players' Team 1 suffered rejection this year. Mr. L. Boughton Charwin had achieved beautiful settings and lightings for "The Tempest" and had coached a responsive Caliban and flexible Ariel into admirable performances; but others in the company were ineffective; the play as a whole failed to come to life; it had to yield precedence to "Hobson's Choice" by Team 2, most of whom were beginners.

The spirit that animated Northfield 2 was exemplified by A. E. Stanford, who had devoted a summer holiday in Scotland to the acquirement of the proper accents for Dr. McFarlane. Of the two old hands it must be said, that J. A. Garland seemed hardly to have realised the need for effort in the earlier acts, but he warmed up well in the last; A. A. Hington—alone of the company—appeared to be repeating a success in another play. J. J. Sykes contrived a strongly individualised Willie Mossop and brought out the development of the character very convincingly. To be as grim and hard as Maggie was beyond the powers of Evelyn Croucher but she kept the part true to her own compass by touching the motherly tenderness of the character with equal lightness. Among the youngsters who took the minor parts there was a most promising sincerity of attack and among the girls an absence of the personal vanity which turns many a West-end performance, amateur and professional, into a mannequin parade.

Unfortunately I was able to see only one other production, "Dear Brutus," by the Moseley Institute. This company is so large that they can cast from type among the more experienced. The danger that they would rely on imitation of professionals was, however, almost completely evaded. H. Celestine Print as Lob gave a rendering full of genuinely Puckish mischief with the appropriate Barrie wistfulness.

My general impression of the Birmingham A.D.F. is that the standard of achievement is high compared with that of any body of amateurs, and that they are moving along the road of experiment and enterprise, not down the blind alley of mechanical imitation.

M.M.

## "EVELINA."

"Evelina" a play derived by Mary Pakington from Fanny Burney's masterpiece was successfully produced by Mr. Robert Newton, at the Rudolf Steiner Hall, London, on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 20th and 21st. A further venture in which Miss Pakington is interested is a season at the Players Theatre, 6 Old Compton Street, W.C., which is to open on June 23rd. Mr. Robert Newton will be the producer and among the plays to be given are "The Tower" by Mary Pakington and some new one-act plays. Further particulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary, 45 Campden Hill Square, W.8.

## HULL PLAY-GOERS "MODERN DRESS" PRODUCTION OF "MUCH ADO"

Cheered by a coridal message of good wishes from Sir Barry Jackson, the "Hull Playgoers' Society" during the week beginning Monday, March 31st last, successfully created a little bit of stage-history by putting on in their own new Miniature Theatre a "Modern Dress" version of Shakespeare's "Much Ado about Nothing."

Actually, the first "modern dress" production of this particular play seen on the English-speaking stage, the Hull Playgoers' presentation of "Much Ado" gained added interest from the fact that it was devised, staged and acted by an entirely amateur society over twenty members taking part in what proved a most delightful production. The humour and poetry of Shakespeare's lines (which were faithfully adhered to throughout) lose nothing of their appeal despite the modern costume of the players and the modern scenes with which the play was given. Performed with appropriate incidental music, and a wealth of colour afforded by pretty frocks and (in some cases) uniforms, "Much Ado" in Modern Dress, played at a rapid tempo in the witty and romantic scenes, and with dramatic impressiveness in the play's more tragic moments, drew delighted audiences for the whole week, the general verdict being that this immortal romance lent itself admirably to "modern" treatment, as handled by the Playgoers' producer.

## THE MARVELLOUS HISTORY OF SAINT BERNARD

This fifteenth century play, translated from the French of Henri Cheon by Sir Barry Jackson and revived recently by the Croydon Players, was performed on April 2nd and 9th by the Evening Drama students of the Polytechnic School of Speech Training. The piece is full of interest, and admirably suited to a large group of students all at different stages in their training.

Miss Pickersgill, the producer, is to be congratulated on the way in which she tackled so ambitious an undertaking with non-professional students. The miming of the devils was remarkable. Special mention should be made of the performances of Miss Darke as Bernard, and of Miss Church as Bernard's irascible father.

## THE BARNET ARTS CLUB'S SUCCESSFUL SEASON

The Barnet Arts Club gave a very successful performance of "The Fourth Wall" by A. A. Milne, in December. The parts of Susan Cunningham and Jimmy Ludgrove were brilliantly portrayed by Miss Rosemary Clayton and Mr. J. A. Nunn.

The proceeds amounting to £35 8s. 11d. were in aid of St. Dunstan's for our Blinded Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen.

Departing from its usual custom of a III Act Play, the Club decided to produce a Variety Programme in April, entitled "Bats." This proved highly satisfactory and enabled the Treasurer to send a cheque for £120 to St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

The Barnet Arts Club has just completed its 9th Season.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### THE BOURNVILLE DRAMATIC SOCIETY

The Bournville Dramatic Society has just concluded a very successful season. This year, for the first time, its meetings have been open to the public at a small charge, an experiment which seems to have justified itself, judging by the numbers attending, and the letters of appreciation received. Membership of the Society is of course confined to employees of Cadbury Brothers, Ltd.

The policy of the Society is to concentrate rather on the play than on the acting, and it is of course impossible for such a body of amateurs to present more than one or two finished productions in a season. Hence, the practice has been to put on a play once a fortnight in the form of a "staged reading," it being left to the enthusiasm of individual casts and producers (taking into account of course the relative claims of the others to rehearsal accommodation, etc.) to carry the respective presentations as nearly as possible to the border line which divides a "staged reading" from a "pukka" show.

Two full length plays were selected as completely finished productions, and each presented on three successive evenings. The season opened with Eden Phillpotts's comedy "St. George and the Dragons," and closed with C. K. Munro's "The Rumour."

The staged readings included "The Lucky One" (Milne), "John Ferguson" (Ervine), "The Polish Jew" (an original adaptation of the old melodrama "The Bells"), "The Romantic Young Lady" (Sierra), "Hobson's Choice" (Brighouse) and "Passing Brompton Road" (Brandon Thomas). A number of one-act plays were also presented, including one original comedy. A lecture by Mr. Frank Jones, B.A., on "Brummagem English," a reading by Mr. E. Stuart Vinden, L.R.A.M., and a recital of madrigals, etc., completed the programme.

W.E.C.

### THE UNITED DAIRIES' DRAMATIC SOCIETY

I witnessed a performance of H. F. Maltby's "The Rotters," presented by the above Society, at the Guildhall School of Music on 9th April last.

I note from my programme that the comedy is described as "a tale of a respectable family." However, the best of families have their weaknesses and the Clogstons are no exception; their youngest daughter is expelled from school, the eldest daughter is found making violent love to the chauffeur, the son is mixed up in a tavern brawl, and the wife omits to mention to Clugston that she had already been led to the altar. Poor Clugston on discovering all this immediately delivers a brilliant lecture on respectability, but at this crucial moment his divorced wife arrives, demanding arrears in alimony, and the rest of the family immediately proceed to practice the gentle art of blackmail on their father. Respectability?

I found the pace a little too slow for broad comedy; there was, too, a general tendency towards playing in one particular strain—a common fault. However, these things all come with practice, and apart from these small points, I enjoyed the United Dairies' Society's performance. Mr. Rupert N. Heath was responsible for the production.

RONALD C. WALTERS.

### DUBLIN

The New Players, an off shoot of the Dublin Drama League, have just completed their 1929-30 season at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, with the production of "A Noise in the Street" by Stephen Schofield, whose play "The Marble God" has been published by The British Drama League and produced by the Gate Theatre, London. Both the play and the production were very favourably reviewed by the Press.

Another very interesting feature of the season was the production (for the first time on any stage in English) of "Mama" by Sierra. In a letter giving permission to the New Players to translate and produce the Play, Madame Maria Martinez Sierra mentioned that all the Sierra plays were written by herself and her husband in collaboration, but that, for private reasons, they had not previously publicly acknowledged the joint authorship. This was the most popular production of the Season and was extremely well reviewed.

"First Blood" by Alan Monkhouse, a production which got excellent press notices, did much to establish the reputation of The New Players, who owe a debt of gratitude to the Author. The fourth play was "The New Morality" by the late Harold Chapin. In each case the Plays were produced and acted an (in the case of the Sierra play) translated by members of the New Players.

### EAST LONDON COLLEGE LITERARY AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY

I made a trip into the East End in order to witness a performance of Herman Ould's "The Dance of Life," the first amateur rendering to be given in London. The production taken as a whole was pleasing. There seemed to be a general tendency to stiffness, particularly with regard to the hands, diction in most cases was clear and distinct. As with many Societies make-up proved to be a stumbling block. Why this should be, I cannot understand, as practically anyone with a sound knowledge of drawing or colour work can master the elementary rules with a little practice. David Woosley should be complimented on his lighting effects.

RONALD C. WALTERS.

### SWANSEA DRAMATIC CLUB

At the Llewellyn Hall, Swansea, during the week commencing April 7th, this Society presented David Gray and Avery Hopwood's comedy, "The Best People." Generally speaking, the Swansea Dramatic Club may be credited with a very satisfactory production, which was directed by Mr. G. Wheatcroft, and stage-managed by Mr. E. H. Barnes-Evans. The Llewellyn Hall is not generously equipped as to stage accommodation, but, allowing for the limitations in this direction, the play was well mounted. A notable performance was given by Miss Ruby G. Joseph in the showy and effective part of Millie, the American chorus girl, and her handling of the transatlantic slangy dialogue was well sustained.

This was the Society's second production of the season, their former presentation being that of Noel Coward's "The Young Idea."

F. R. LEWIS



"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING."  
MODERN DRESS PRODUCTION BY THE  
HULL PLAYGOER'S SOCIETY, APRIL, 1930.  
MR. SYDNEY THOMPSON'S SETTING FOR  
THE QUARREL SCENE ("A PUBLIC  
PLACE") BETWEEN ANTONIO (LEFT),  
CLAUDIO (CENTRE), AND DON PEDRO  
(RIGHT).



"THE MAN WHO WOULDN'T GO TO HEAVEN." THE COMPANY OF THE HAMPSTEAD PLAY AND PAGEANT UNION WHICH WON THE HOWARD DE WALDEN CUP IN MR. F. SLADEN-SMITH'S PLAY AT THE NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA, AT THE QUEEN'S THEATRE, APRIL 28, 1930.

## NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

### THE MEDWAY THEATRE CLUB

On April the 28th "The Medway Theatre Club" opened a three nights season at the Corn Exchange Maidstone. Two plays were presented, a one-act comedy by John Galsworthy, "Punch and Go," and "Women Have Their Way," a two-act comedy by S. and J. A. Quintero, translated from the Spanish by Helen and Harley Granville-Barker.

"Punch and Go" proved to be an amusing and clever skit on commercialism versus highbrow art in the theatre, and being written in the form of a play within a play, a very difficult one to produce. In the hands of a less experienced producer it might very easily have lost its point and failed to convey the intentions of the author, but Miss Muriel Hutchinson surmounted the difficulty admirably.

"Women have their way" was produced with an attention to detail that was wholly admirable. The costumes, setting and furnishing were charming to the eye, and, together with the excellent deportment of the players, created the necessary Spanish atmosphere. The team work and the sincerity of every one concerned was obvious, and refreshing, and if, occasionally, the point of a witty line was lost, the delightful humour of the play was consistently upheld.

"The Medway Theatre Club" has only been in existence for three years, and the majority of its members are young in years and experience; that it should have achieved so much in so short a time is an excellent augury for the future. Mr. Bernard Benson, the founder of the society, and now its secretary and organizer, is to be congratulated on this promise, which is largely a result of the energy and enthusiasm he has put into the Club, and the inspiration his knowledge and love of the Theatre and its literature have been to the members.

CYRIL GRANT-CHESTER.

### BRISTOL

I had the pleasure of judging the annual competition for original one-act plays organised by the Clifton Arts Club, Bristol. The method by which the competition is organised is interesting. Entries are asked for by advertisement in Great Britain and America. Out of these, six are selected by an independent examiner. Six local producers draw for these out of a hat, and find their own casts. The plays are then produced, and the judge is asked to pronounce upon them as so produced and acted, that is to say, as pieces of "theatre." The Competition takes place in the Club theatre, and lasts for three nights; three plays each night. The judge names the winner of each group on the first two nights, and these two, with the "best loser," play in the Final for the First Prize. A second prize is awarded by "popular" vote.

On this occasion, in April, there had been upwards of a hundred entries—a surprising number. Of the six which were selected as the best for performance, three came from America, one from Barbados, and the other two from home—one of them, as it turned out, written by a member of the Club. The general standard of the plays was high. There was only one weak one among them. The standard of production, as one might expect from Bristol, was also

high, and in each case triumphed over the difficulties of a restricted stage. Most of the acting was first-rate. The authors of the plays were very well served indeed. In the issue, and to everybody's delight (including the Judge's when it was over), the first prize was awarded to Mr. Stephen Barnett with a play entitled "The 300th Performance," a drama of quite excellent quality, well conceived and firmly written, which came to life the moment the curtain went up, and proceeded with accumulating effect to a fine "curtain." Mr. Barnett is a member of the Clifton Arts Club, and, as luck would have it, his play had been drawn by Miss Roberts who is the Club's producer. So it was in the way of a family triumph.

The whole arrangements were excellently carried out; the plays were performed each night to capacity audiences; and everything, including the judge's verdict, went to make the affair a great success. The general idea of the Competition is such a good one, that one wonders why other centres do not copy it.

EDWARD LEWIS.

### BELFAST

The Northern Drama League, Belfast, has just concluded its seventh season, during which it produced the following plays:

"The Inspector General" (Gogol); "The Mistress of the Inn" (Goldoni); "Heartbreak House" (Shaw); "Minna von Barnhelm" (Lessing); "The Twelve Pound Look" (Barrie); "The Theatre of the Soul" (Evrienov); "Suppressed Desires" (Glaspell).

We achieved our greatest success of the season with the most difficult play—"Heartbreak House," though perhaps the artistic success, not alone in acting, but in staging and lighting was in the Russian psychological drama "The Theatre of the Soul." We would recommend this play to any society that wants to gratify the ambitions of all sections of its active members.

In addition to our producing programme, we organised the Northern Dramatic Feis, for which sufficient entries were received to occupy the programme time at the Empire Theatre for a full week. Altogether 18 plays, both long and short, were produced by competing societies from all over Northern Ireland, as well as from Dublin. Mr. Frank Fay gave us some most informative adjudications, laying much stress on technique. We had excellent support from the outside public. In the class for one-act plays in M.S. we discovered in the winning play, "The Stocking," written by a local artisan, a powerful little drama.

It is hoped next year to affiliate the one-act play sections of the Feis with the Northern Area of the National Festival, which ought to add even greater impetus to the Amateur movement in our area.

WILFRID CAMPFIELD.

### NEW PLAYS WANTED.

The following Society affiliated to the League is willing to consider MSS. of unproduced plays with a view to production.

STOCKPORT GARRICK SOCIETY. Secretary, Mr. E. R. Lingard. "Rosscullean," Dialstone Lane, Stockport.

# ELEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

To be presented at the Annual General Meeting, to be held at 8 Adelphi Terrace,  
on Friday, June 27th, 1930, at 2.30 p.m.

IN submitting the Eleventh Annual Report of the British Drama League, the Council are able to report another year of progress. On June 30, 1929, the League's membership stood at 2,920. It is now 3,059. During the year 680 new members joined. There have been 541 resignations. These include a large number of members whose subscriptions had been owing for the past two or three years and whose names had not been removed from the Register, at the date of the last Report. The number of affiliated societies now on the register is 1,710.

With a view to a better enforcement of the rule dealing with the payment of subscriptions, the Council recommends that in future a member whose subscription is more than three months over-due shall not continue to receive the benefits of membership, but shall remain on the register of members for a period of twelve months, after which his name shall be removed.

## PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATION ON THE COUNCIL.

In accordance with the resolution passed at the Autumn Conference of the League, held at Sheffield on November 3, 1928, and endorsed at the Annual General Meeting of the League, held in London on June 28 last, the rules of the League have been revised so as to admit of representation on the Council of the League from ten areas in England, Scotland and Wales. These revised rules are now in circulation, and the Council on its enlarged basis will take up its duties as from June 30, 1930.

## NATIONAL FESTIVAL OF COMMUNITY DRAMA.

The Fourth National Festival of Community Drama was organised by the National Festival Committee, consisting of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth (Chairman), Mr. F. E. Doran, Miss Elsie Fogerty, Mr. C. B. Purdom (Hon. Treasurer), Mr. Harold Ridge, Mr. G. Sharman, with the addition of the following who were the appointed representatives of the four Areas into which the country was divided for the purposes of the Festival: Dr. C. Bernard Childs and Mr. Campbell Buchan (Scottish Area), Mr. John Hirst (Northern Area), Mr. Boughton Chatwin and Mr. C. M. Haines (Western Area), Mr. H. Weston Wells and Mr. George Williams (Eastern Area). 390 groups competed in all, as compared with 205 last year—and Area and Divisional Festivals were held during February and March, preliminary judging having been undertaken locally. The judges appointed by the British Drama League were Mr. William Armstrong, for the Scottish Area, Mr. Miles Malleson for the Northern Area, Mr. John Fernald for the Western Area, and Dr. L. du Garde Peach for the Eastern Area. The Scottish Area, having the larger number of entries, was entitled to send two teams for the National Final.

The five teams thus selected competed at the Final Festival, held at the Queen's Theatre, London, on April 28, kindly lent by Sir Alfred Butt and Sir Barry Jackson. The programme was made up as follows:

D. Cleghorn Thomson's Blythswood Players	in "The War Memorial"	by D. Cleghorn Thomson.
York Settlement Community Players	in "Gruach"	by Gordon Bottomley.
Dartmouth Players	in "The Farmer's Wife" Act III	by Eden Phillpotts.
Falkirk High School F. P. Dramatic Circle.	in "The Singing Sands"	by Gordon Bottomley.
The Hampstead Play and Pageant Union.	in "The Man Who Wouldn't go to Heaven"	by F. Sladen-Smith.

The judges were Miss Irene Vanbrugh and Mr. Ivor Brown. They awarded the Cup to the Hampstead Play and Pageant Union, and it was then presented by the Right Hon. Sir Charles Trevelyan, P.C., M.P.

The award for the best original play entered in the Festival was made by Mr. W. A. Darlington to the Rev. L. J. Hines and Mr. Nelson King for their play "Vindication," produced by the Halifax Thespians.

## AUTUMN CONFERENCE.

The Autumn Conference of Affiliated Societies was held at Northampton on October 25 and 26.

On Friday, October 25, delegates were welcomed by the Mayor of Northampton in the Guildhall. In the evening they attended a special Gala Performance at the Opera House of "The Queen was in the ParLOUR" by the Repertory Players. Before the commencement of the play an address was given by Lord Lytton on the need for a National Repertory Theatre, the Chair being taken by Colonel Cecil Malone, M.P. On Saturday, the proceedings began with an inspection of the stage and studio of the Opera House, under the guidance of Mr. Herbert Prentice, followed during the morning and afternoon by the business Conference which was held under the Chairmanship of Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The full Minutes of the meeting were circulated in the December Number of DRAMA. In the evening, after an informal dinner presided over by Lord Henley, the delegates heard an address on "Dramatic Training" by Professor Gilbert Murray. Two dramatic performances followed, given by teams of the Northamptonshire Federation of Women's Institutes. On Sunday morning a special Sermon was preached in the Parish Church by the Rev. Trevor Lewis on the history of the relations between Church and Stage. The Conference concluded with a luncheon, very kindly given by Lord and Lady Henley at Watford Court to over a hundred delegates.

The thanks of the Council are due to Lord and Lady Henley, and also to Mr. Bassett-Lowke, Mr. Herbert Prentice and Mr. Reginald Browne, who did so much to make the Conference a success.

## NATIONAL THEATRE.

As a result of the resolution proposed by Mr. Robert Young, M.P., and passed at the Northampton Conference as follows:

"That this Conference of the British Drama League, believing that the Government is in sympathy with the idea and establishment of a National Theatre and would favourably consider a practical and agreed scheme to this end, requests the Council to take early and energetic measures to achieve this great object."

The Council of the League took immediate action, and communications were made to the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee. That Committee called a Conference at a Committee Room in the House of Commons on November 25, which was presided over by Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson. A general resolution in favour of a National Theatre was passed unanimously, and it was also resolved that a new Drafting Committee should be appointed with the object of drawing up a detailed scheme for a National Theatre to be presented to the Prime Minister. This Committee was to be selected by a Nomination Panel consisting of two representatives of the Shakespeare Memorial National Theatre Committee, two representatives of the British Drama League, and two representatives of the Parliamentary Committee which had already been formed for this and kindred purposes. Lord Lytton and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth represented the British Drama League on this Nomination Panel and in the event, the following were nominated for the new Drafting Committee:

Lord Lytton (Chairman), Miss Lena Ashwell, Mr. Kenneth R. Barnes, Sir Israel Gollancz (Hon. Sec.), Mr. Percy Harris, M.P., Major Hills, P.C., M.P., Sir Barry Jackson, Mr. Holford Knight, K.C., M.P., Sir Frank Meyer, Professor Allardyce Nicoll, Mr. Walter Payne, Sir Nigel Playfair, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth.

With a view to promoting the cause of a National Theatre, the British Drama League organised on January 31, a Public meeting at the Kingsway Hall. The Earl of Lytton presided, and the speakers included Mr. Bernard Shaw, Miss Lena Ashwell, Mrs. Philip Snowden and Sir Donald Maclean. The following resolution was passed unanimously:

"That the Meeting convened by the British Drama League registers its support of the project to establish a National Theatre in London, and welcomes the present effort to promote an agreed scheme for submission to the Prime Minister."

A further Public meeting was held at Manchester, by arrangement with the Manchester Playgoers. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Holford Knight, K.C., M.P., and a similar resolution was passed. Mr. Robert Young, M.P., addressed a meeting with similar aims and result at Plymouth.

## VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY.

158 Village Groups are now jointly affiliated to the Village Drama Society and the British Drama League, one half of their subscriptions being paid by the League to the Village Drama Society.

## MAGAZINE.

The arrangement with Messrs. B. Roberts and Company has been working satisfactorily, and the advance in circulation is maintained.

## SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL THEATRE.

In recognition of the generous donations from amateur Societies towards the re-building of the Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, the Governors of that theatre invited the British Drama League to nominate a representative to the Board of Governors. This invitation was accepted, and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth now represents the League on that body, with membership of the Executive Council.

## VISIT OF AMERICAN DRAMA LEAGUE.

In July last the League had the pleasure of welcoming the members of the European theatre tour organised by the Drama League of America. An "At Home" was held in the Library at 8 Adelphi Terrace, and Mr. John Drinkwater welcomed the visitors on behalf of the League.

## JUNIOR DRAMA COMMITTEE.

The work of this committee has been hampered during the year by the unfortunately prolonged illness of its chairman, Miss Maude Scott. It has met seven times, and, in addition to routine work, has organized the second Dramatic Festival for Elementary Societies in the London Area. There were 48 entries for this competition. The Preliminary Round was judged by Mr. Mordaunt Shairp. The final was held in the St. Pancras People's Theatre on April 26th, when the Judge, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, awarded the Trophy in the Intermediate Section to the West Central Jewish Girl's Club playing a scene from "Hamlet," and in the Senior Section to the St. Matthews Old Boys' Club, playing Laurence Housman's "Brother Wolf." The Council desires to return their thanks to Mr. Edward Lewis for so ably organising this Festival.

## DRAMA AND EDUCATION.

On Friday, January 3, a meeting of the Conference of Educational Associations at University College, Gower Street, was held, in collaboration with the Modern Languages Association, the subject being "Foreign Plays as an Instrument in Language Learning." Mr. Henry Ainley took the Chair, and the speakers included Miss Fogerty, Mr. T. R. Dawes and Professor Findlay.

In March last "Le Theatre Classique Universitaire" a Company of Players from the Comedie Francaise, the Odeon and the Paris Conservatoire, under the direction of M. Toudouze, made a short English tour, and on March 14, gave two performances under the auspices of the League at the Institut Francais, London. The tour was organised by Mr. T. R. Dawes, of Castleford, and performances were also given to Schools and Colleges at Folkestone, Barnsley, Hull, Castleford and Bedford.

## DRAMA SCHOOLS AND LECTURES.

The fourth Easter School for Amateurs was held at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, by kind permission of Mr. Kenneth Barnes, from April 19 to 30. Rehearsals were conducted by Mr. Norman Page. Classes in verse-speaking were held by Miss Elsie Fogerty, and in Costumes and Properties by Mrs. Nesfield Cookson. Three Demonstrations of Lighting and Make-up were given by Mr. Harold Ridge. Lectures on various "Points of view in the Theatre" were delivered by Mr. Maurice Browne, Mr. Maurice Farquharson, Miss Mary Kelly, Mr. Oliver Bolton King, Miss Margaret Macnamara and Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth. The performances at the last day were generally considered to reach a higher standard than those at any previous Easter School.

Rural Schools organised by the British Drama League and the Village Drama Society are under the supervision of the Rural Drama Committee, but after one experiment it became clear that a great deal of secretarial labour can be saved by allowing each of the two bodies to manage and finance its Schools in complete independence.

The Village Drama Society's School at Tavistock (August 7 to 21) was staffed by Mrs. Gibson, Miss Isabel Chisman and Miss Mary Kelly.

The Drama League's School at Fairlight Barn Theatre was opened by Lady Maud Warrender, rehearsals were under the direction of Miss Edith Craig; lectures were given by Mr. Val Gielgud, Miss Macnamara, Mr. Mordaunt Shairp, Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth and Mr. Harcourt Williams. At St. Andrews (August 21 to 30) the League was assisted by the Scottish Community Drama Association; the bulk of the rehearsing was done by Mr. W. G. Fay; the rest by Mr. Tyrone Guthrie, Miss Macnamara and Miss Enid Maxwell. Birkenhead School (September 21 to 28) was organised locally by Beechcroft Settlement and opened by Mr. William Armstrong. Mr. Norman Marshall conducted rehearsals; lectures were delivered by Sir Barry Jackson and Miss Macnamara. Schools are projected at the Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich (July 24 to August 1) and again at St. Andrews' (August 18 to 28).

A three-day School was held by Miss Macnamara at Harlech. One-day Schools, by Miss Kelly at Llanfairfechan, Miss Macnamara at Durham, and Mrs. Ramsden at four centres in Dorset.

In addition to the names above mentioned, production work and lectures have also been undertaken on behalf of the League by Miss Freda Gaye, Miss Eva Saunderson, Mr. Robert Newton, Miss Lloyd King, Mr. B. A. Pittar, Mr. Norman Marshall, Mr. Edward Lewis, Mr. Mordaunt Shairp, Miss Mary Kelly, Mr. Harold Rubinstein, and Miss Hutchinson.

## CRITICAL REPORTS.

Critical reports on 112 plays have been sent to members during the past twelve months.

## CLUB ROOM.

The membership of the Club Room now numbers 321, and since January 1, arrangements have been made to supply light lunches and teas. The Club Room is now open from 10.30 a.m. to 7.0 p.m. every day except Sundays. It is hoped that the membership will increase during the coming year. A debate was held on February 7, the motion that "Dramatic Schools are a waste of time" being proposed by Miss Muriel Pratt and opposed by Mr. Kenneth Barnes. The motion was not carried.

## THE LIBRARY.

The Library Committee report further progress in the development of the Library. 2,700 volumes have been added during the past year, bringing the total number of volumes acquired by the Library since its inception to 17,311. (This figure includes the replacement of some 1,200 volumes which have at various times since 1925 become too worn for further use or have been lost. The actual number of volumes now in the Library is therefore 17,029.)

The following statistics of books issued during the year are interesting, as showing that members of the League appreciate the value of the Library and make full use of it. The total number of issues during the year was 28,757, an increase of 3,654 on the previous year. Of this number 20,754 were plays from the Lending Library, 2,726 were critical works, and 5,297 were reading sets. The increase in the number of reading sets sent out was 725.

Among the more notable additions during the year have been: Aphra Behn: Works. 6 vols. ed. M. Summers. Samuel Foote: Dramatic works. 2 vols. Sir Charles Sedley: Poetical and dramatic works. ed. V. de Sola Pinto. 2 vols. G. A. d'Agnel and L. Dor: Noel en Provence. G. C. D. Odell: Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving. 2 vols. Monumenta Scenica. Series X. P. McPharlin: Repertory of marionette plays.

A Book-Box containing 13 books on production, costume, the history of stage-craft, etc., and 25 representative plays, has been added to the Library and is available for hire by members organising Drama Schools.

The Committee and Council wish to express their grateful thanks to Mrs. Courtney, Mr. St. John Ervine, Mr. W. W. Hickson, Mr. H. C. D. Pepler, The Liverpool Repertory Theatre Co., Miss Harrison and others, who have made presentations of books to the Library during the year.

The Committee are glad to report that Mr. Norman Wilkinson has accepted an invitation to become one of their members.

The work of compiling the new catalogue for the Library, which had been entrusted to Mrs. Kent, was completed early in the present year. It is now on sale at 5s., while a cloth-bound edition is being published by Messrs. Victor Gollancz at the price of 7s. 6d.

